

# THE DRAUPADIVASTRAHARAṆA EPISODE: AN INTERPOLATION IN THE MAHABHARATA.\*

BY

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1. The Draupadivastraharaṇa (Dv) episode appears in the Sabhā Parvan of the Mbh. (Ch. 61, vv. 40-48, Critical ed.) Its length and contents vary in the different editions of the great epic. The longest account of the Dv. appears in the Kumbhakonam ed. (Ch. 90, vv. 40-58) rightly described as a misch-edition; while the shortest account appears in the critical ed. published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona. The Vulgate represented by the Citraśālā Press ed. (Ch. 68, vv. 40-55) and the Madras ed. (Ch. 61, vv. 42-57) representing the Southern Recension have practically got the same extent of the episode, with some different verses. The critical ed. and the Vulgate have the same order of events, while the Madras and the Kumbh. eds. have a different order.

2. The chief events in the Dv. episode are according to the Critical ed. three, *viz.* (1) Duḥśāsana tearing off Draupadī's cloth, and the appearance of a new garment (vv. 40-42), (2) Bhīma taking a vow of drinking the blood of Duḥśāsana (vv. 43-47), and, (3) a heap of Draupadī's garments stopping Duḥśāsana from his activity (v. 48). There is no mention of Draupadī's pathetic appeal to Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the Vraja and dear to Gopīs—an appeal which appears in the Vulgate (vv. 42-48), the Madras ed. (vv. 43-50) and the Kumbh. ed. (vv. 41-51). Bhīma's vow of tasting the blood of Duḥśāsana appears at the end in the Madras and Kumbh. eds., while it appears before Duḥśāsana desists from his action, in the Vulgate and in the Critical ed.

3. The omission of Draupadī's appeal to Kṛṣṇa from the Critical ed., on the strength of the unfailing evidence of Mss. is, indeed, very significant, and confirms the opinions of Sir Bhandarkar,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Winternitz,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Farquhar<sup>3</sup> and Mr.

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1. Vaiṣṇavism etc., p. 36, fn. 1.

2. A History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 344, fn. 2.

3. Outline of the Religious Literature of India, p. 100, fn. 6.

Utgikar.<sup>1</sup> The shortest account in the Critical ed., therefore, represents an earlier stage of the Dv. episode. The later redactors are mainly responsible for the longer versions including Draupadi's appeal to Kṛṣṇa. The old simple stories were later on embroidered with the obvious motive of glorifying Kṛṣṇa as the highest divinity, and of creating interest in the audience. Prof. Edgerton, the learned editor of the Critical ed. of the Sabhā Parvan, holds the view that the shortest account of the Dv. episode, as given in the Critical ed., appeared in the original Mbh.<sup>2</sup> An attempt is here made to show on the strength of the internal and external evidence that the very Dv. episode did not form part of the original Mbh. and that it was later on introduced with the object of depicting the Kauravas in the worst light possible for satisfying the audience whose sympathies always went with the Pāṇḍavas, and further developed in the cause of Kṛṣṇa-cult.

4. A clear reference to Dv. and the supply of garments in a miraculous way appears in the verses 40 and 41 (Crit. ed.), while the verses 42 and 48 make a secondary reference to the miracle. The intervening verses 43-47 refer to Bhīma's vow of drinking the blood of Duṣṣāsana, which is the logical sequence of the Dv. described in the preceding verses. It will be shown later on that the vow of Bhīma, also, did not appear in the original Mbh.

5. It was pointed out long ago by the late Mr. Utgikar,<sup>3</sup> who examined fourteen Mss. of the Sabhā Parvan, that the vv. 40-45 of the 68th ch. of the Vulgate are omitted in certain Mss. There is, however, some discrepancy in his statements, when he mentions the vv. 41-45 (and not 40-45 as previously done) in the tabular statement in the Appendix II.<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to decide at present which of the two statements is correct. If the first statement (vv. 40 to 45) is accurate, the primary reference to the Dv. (vv. 40-41, Cri. ed.) becomes impossible, and the interpolated nature of the Dv. is proved beyond doubt. If it is presumed that the second statement

1. Annals, BORI., Vol. II, pp. 164-165.

2. Critical ed. of the Sabhā Parvan, Introduction, pp. XXVIII, XXIX.

3. 'Our Mahābhārata work', Annals BORI. Vol. II, pp. 155-188.

4. Ibid, p. 187.

(vv. 41-45) is reliable, a part of the primary reference to the Dv. has to be eliminated from the text. (41-a of the Vulgate= 41-ab of the Crit. ed.) The problem, therefore, remains moot. It is necessary to turn to some other strong evidence, which is fortunately available.

6. There is a dialogue between Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Sañjaya in the Mbh. I. 1. The blind king narrates the events of the whole epic in the famous Anukramaṇī Parvan. He refers to all important events in a regular order but does not allude to Dv. The footnote in the Critical ed. of the Ādi Parvan gives a verse referring to the Dv.,<sup>1</sup> found in the Vulgate and the Kumbh. ed., but not in the Madras ed. There is also, a significant omission of Bhīma's vow of drinking Duḥśāsana's blood from Dhṛtarāṣṭra's description. The Madras ed. agrees with the Critical ed. even in this respect. The Vulgate and the Kumbh. ed., however, contain a verse referring to the vow of Bhīma, and this verse is put in the footnote of the Critical ed.<sup>2</sup> There is one more verse in the footnote<sup>3</sup> mentioning the same topic, but is not found in the Vulgate, the Madras ed. and the Kumbh. ed. The footnotes in the Critical ed. clearly show how the Anukramaṇī Parvan has directly varied with the Mbh. At any rate it is quite obvious that in the earlier stage in the history of the Mbh. text, there were no Dv. episode and the vow of Bhīma to drink Duḥśāsana's blood. That Bhīma's vow is a later addition is wonderfully supported by the omission of the event from the summary of the Karna Parvan given in the well-known Parva-saṅgraha Parvan.<sup>4</sup> The Madras ed. agrees with the Critical ed. The footnote in the Critical ed. mentions a verse referring to Bhīma's vow,<sup>5</sup> and this verse is found in the Vulgate and the Kumbh. ed. The dynamic nature of the Parva-saṅgraha Parvan, also, is quite evident from the footnotes in the Critical ed.

7. There is another evidence in the Udyoga Parvan of the Mbh. (Critical ed.) showing that the Dv. episode is a late interpolation. At the instance of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Sañjaya approaches the Pāṇḍavas and dissuades them from fighting, on

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1. p. 17, 40.\*

2. p. 23, 54.\*

3. p. 23, 55.\*

4. Mbh. I. 2. 169-172 (pp. 52-53).

5. pp. 52-53, 152.\*

philosophical grounds. Kṛṣṇa is annoyed at the sermon of Sañjaya and draws his attention to the atrocities committed by the Kauravas.<sup>1</sup> There is a bare reference to Duḥśāsana bringing Draupadī to the hall but there is no mention of Dv. and catching hold of her hair in Kṛṣṇa's retort to Sañjaya.<sup>2</sup> Later on,<sup>3</sup> Yudhiṣṭhira, also, rebukes Sañjaya and enumerates all heinous offences perpetrated by the Kauravas. Here also, as before, there is no reference to Dv., but there is an allusion to Duḥśāsana's seizing Draupadī's hair only.<sup>4</sup> These are the two occasions where Kṛṣṇa and Yudhiṣṭhira are expected to make a reference to the Dv., if it were a fact at all. The omission of the Dv. event is most significant, and is quite sufficient to prove that the Dv. episode was not part of the original Mbh.

8. Further, the Karna Parvan of the Mbh. (Citraśālā Press ed.) furnishes us with additional evidence. During fighting, the wheel of Karna's chariot sinks in the mud, and Karna requests Arjuna not to commence fight, on the ground of military code. (Ch. 90). At that time Kṛṣṇa criticises Karna (Ch. 91) for his hypocrisy, and reminding him of his immoral conduct in the past refers to Duḥśāsana's bringing Draupadī to the assembly-hall, but does not mention the removal of Draupadī's garment, and even the seizure of her hair.<sup>5</sup> Had the Dv. been a fact, a reference to it on such an occasion was necessary, nay, inevitable. Kṛṣṇa's silence on this point is, by itself, an adequate piece of evidence in support of the interpolated nature of the Dv. episode.

9. The same Parvan, again, furnishes another evidence also. In the Ch. 83, there is a dialogue between Bhīma and Duḥśāsana, before Bhīma fulfils his vow of drinking the blood of Duḥśāsana. In two places, Bhīma refers to Duḥśāsana dragging the hair of Draupadī, but is wonderfully silent on the removal of her garment<sup>6</sup>. Duḥśāsana in reply to Bhīma refers in a boasting manner to his act of dragging Draupadī's hair,

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1. Mbh. V. 29.

2. Mbh. V. 29. 30-33.

3. Mbh. V. 31.

4. Mbh. V. 31. 13-16.

5. Mbh. VIII. 91. 2-8.

6. Mbh. VIII. 83, 20, 21, 46, 48.

but not to that of stripping her of her clothes.<sup>1</sup> If Draupadī's garment was actually removed by Duḥśāsana, it is most unnatural for both Bhīma and Duḥśāsana not to refer to it in the circumstances. The silence on the part of excited Bhīma and arrogant Duḥśāsana, regarding the Dv. episode, naturally leads one to believe that there was nothing of the type in the original Mbh. The episode of Bhīma drinking the blood of Duḥśāsana is, as shown before, a later development; and even this later interpolation does not refer to the Dv.—a feature which naturally raises suspicion about the authenticity of the Dv. episode.

10. There is, however, one place in the Kārṇa Parvan where there is a reference to both the dragging of Draupadī's hair and the removal of her garment by Duḥśāsana.<sup>2</sup> Bhīma recollects these two crimes of Duḥśāsana, besides other persecutions, is extremely provoked and makes a fiery speech. The verse appears in the Kumbh. ed. also (VIII, 85, 17). I am informed by Dr. P. L. Vaidya, preparing the critical edition of the Kārṇa Parva, that the the verse (Ch. 83, 15) mentioning the removal of Draupadī's garment is an interpolation, and as such, does not form part of the text in the Critical edition. It may be noted here that the Madras ed. of the Kārṇa Parvan does not contain the verse. It is, therefore, permissible to suppose that the verse did not appear in the original Mbh. These are all the cross references in the Mbh., which do not make any reference to the Dv., even when they are expected to do so; and there is not a single cross-reference to the Dv. in the Mbh.—a fact which proves, beyond doubt, that the Dv. did not form part of the original Mbh. and that it was subsequently added and enlarged from time to time.

11. There are, again, two more places in the Mbh. where one would naturally expect a reference to the removal of Draupadī's garment, if at all it was a fact. The first case is in the Āraṇyaka Parvan. When Kṛṣṇa goes to see the Pāṇḍavas in the forest, Draupadī cannot help enumerating all sorts of harassment by the Kauravas, and mentions her seizure by hair (Ch. 13, v. 103, Crit. ed.), but does not refer to the removal of her garment. The other case occurs in the Śalya Parvan, Ch. 31, (Citraśālā Press ed.). When Duryo-

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1. Mbh. VIII. 83, 24.

2. Mbh. VIII. 83, 15.

dhana entered the Dvaipāyana lake and refused to fight, Yudhiṣṭhira, under instructions from Kṛṣṇa, goaded Duryodhana to fight, and remarked that he had no business to live as he committed a series of heinous offences. Yudhiṣṭhira, then, mentions the crimes of Duryodhana and refers to his dragging Draupadī (v. 71), but does not allude to the removal of her garment. The omission of the removal of Draupadī's garment even on these two occasions is very significant, and strengthens the view that the whole episode is a later interpolation.

12. Besides the internal evidence, there is also some external evidence in support of our theory. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Bh) is clearly a work glorifying Kṛṣṇa as the highest divinity, the lord of Vraja and dear to Gopīs. There are in the Bh. altogether four references to the actions of Duṣṣāsana which mention only the seizure of Draupadī's hair and are wonderfully silent on the Dv.<sup>1</sup> It has been shown that the Dv. episode was developed with Draupadī's fervent appeal to Kṛṣṇa, the lord of Vraja and dear to Gopīs, with the purpose of magnifying the personality of Kṛṣṇa. One would naturally expect the Bh., a work purely Kṛṣṇaite in nature, to refer to the Dv. episode with an appeal to Kṛṣṇa. But the omission from the Bh. is most significant, and shows that the Dv. episode did not appear in the original Mbh.

13. Even in the classical Sanskrit literature, happily, a piece of evidence is available. Bhāsa's drama, Dūta-vākya (Act I) refers to a canvas where Duṣṣāsana is painted as dragging the hair of Draupadī. In all, there are three references to this painting, two by Duryodhana and one by Kṛṣṇa. Duryodhana once refers to the dragging of both hair and garment, but later on refers to the dragging of hair only. Kṛṣṇa while seeing the portrait rejects it on the ground that it is indecent as there is the dragging of Draupadī's hair. Kṛṣṇa's remark does not refer to Draupadī's garment. The omission of the garment even from Kṛṣṇa's speech is very significant and naturally raises the suspicion with regard to the genuineness of the Dv. episode in the Mbh. In the third alone there is reference to both hair and garment as against the two references to hair only; but here the word *ambara* in the compound *Keśāmbara* may be an interpolation; or the

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1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa I. 86; 15-10; III. 1.7; XI. 1.2.

compound word may be explained as 'the garment over the hair or head' of Draupadī, in which case the complete stripping of Draupadī's garment is not intended. It is, therefore, quite possible that the Mbh. as known to Bhāsa (4th century B.C.) did not contain any reference to the Dv. episode.

14. There are, again, other considerations which lend support to what has been stated above. The first point that draws our attention is the element of miracle in the appearance of one garment after another when the only piece of cloth on the body of Draupadī was being removed by Duḥśāsana. This feature is retained in the shortest account of the Dv., in the Critical ed. of the Sabhā Parvan. The learned editor, Prof. Edgerton, describes the feature as cosmic justice which automatically or magically prevented the chaste and noble Draupadī from being stripped in public.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation of Prof. Edgerton is, no doubt, ingenious, and does full justice to the poetic genius of the redactors of the Mbh. But the question that naturally arises is whether such a miracle actually took place in the assembly hall. One is inclined to think that such miracles belong to the province of fiction and not to that of history; and if this is correct—and it seems to be correct—the Dv. episode has to be marked as a later interpolation coming from some poetic brain of a subsequent period.

15. Another point which raises suspicion about the Dv. episode is the presentation of two conflicting versions put side by side even in the Critical ed. of the Sabhā Parvan (Ch. 60). When Draupadī was lost in gambling, Duryodhana sent his servant to bring her to his own palace. The servant conveyed the message to Draupadī who raised a legal issue which compelled him to return to Duryodhana. Duryodhana again asked the servant to go to Draupadī once more with the instruction that she should plead her cause in person in the assembly hall. The servant again went to Draupadī and delivered the message of Duryodhana, whereupon Draupadī expressed her full confidence in Dharma which was expected to stand by her (vv. 11-13). Immediately after this, there appear two verses (14-15) to the effect that Yudhiṣṭhira, knowing the mind of Duryodhana, sent a trusted servant to Drau-

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1. Sabhā Parvan, Intro. p. XXIX.

padī and the latter came into the assembly and stood before her father-in-law. The verses (16 ff.) that immediately follow tell a different story, according to which Duryōdhana, again, addressed his servant, the Prātikāmin, asking him to bring Draupadī and when he hesitated, asked Duḥśāsana to do so, and the latter carried out the order most willingly.

16. All these verses clearly show three conflicting versions, *viz.*, the Prātikāmin, again, going to Draupadī, (2) Yudhiṣṭhira sending his own servant to Draupadī and Draupadī appearing in the hall, and (3) Duryōdhana sending Duḥśāsana to Draupadī when the Prātikāmin was unwilling, and Duḥśāsana dragging Draupadī by the hair to the hall.<sup>1</sup> The first version is evidently incomplete, and an attempt has been made by later redactors to make it complete and bring it in line with the third version, by the insertion of additional verses which are put in the foot-note in the Critical ed.,<sup>2</sup> and which are found in the Vulgate. The discord between the first and the third version is thus removed. There is, then, the question of the version No. 2 and the version No. 3, which are clearly at variance. Both of them could not have formed part of the original epic. One of the two versions has, therefore, to be taken as original, and the other as a later development. It appears that the shorter and natural account found in the version No. 2 is earlier than the elaborate account in the version No. 3. In that case, Duḥśāsana dragging Draupadī to the hall and later on outraging her modesty could not have been a matter of history; and consequently the Dv. episode must have been introduced in the epic at a later stage.

17. The last point for consideration is the society in the times of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. The only evidence that is available is literary, and that too is scanty. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā but did not make any attempt to outrage her modesty during her stay in Laṅkā and this shows some culture even on the part of Rāvaṇa, the villain of the sister epic. The literature ranging from the Brāhmins to the Śūdras does not show the moral deterioration which could have made the conduct such as that of Duḥśāsana quite normal. It appears that the society of the Pāṇḍava-Kaurava period was not so depraved as to make Duḥśāsana's

1. *ibid.* Intro. pp. XXXI—XXXII.

2. *Sabhā Parvan* pp. 293-294, 531-534.\*



action possible. At any rate the moral standard of the Kṣatriyas at the time of the Bhārata battle was far from being low. And this would not leave any scope for the most abominable action of removing the garment of Draupadī by Duṣṣāsana in the original epic, which was in all probability a work of pure history.

18. The examination of the whole evidence available in connection with the Dv. episode, thus, leads us to the irresistible conclusion that the Dv. episode did not form part of the original epic and that it was introduced later on by the redactors of the epic, with motives too well-known. A careful study of the critical edition of the Mbh. and the most valuable foot-notes and the appendices therein, make it possible to find out the several stages in the development of the Dv. episode.